



U.S. Immigration
and Customs
Enforcement

News Release

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WOMAN FACES HUMAN TRAFFICKING CHARGES FOR BRINGING RUSSIAN NIECE TO U.S. TO ENGAGE IN FORCED PROSTITUTION

LOS ANGELES — A Russian national who resided in West Los Angeles was taken into federal custody today for allegedly executing a scheme to illegally bring her teenage niece to the United States and then forcing the girl to engage in prostitution.

Alena Okhotina, 35, was taken into custody early this afternoon by the United States Marshals Service. Okhotina had just completed serving a two-year, two-month state prison term for a conviction on pandering charges related to the alleged forced prostitution.

A federal grand jury in Los Angeles indicted Okhotina on April 27 on charges of sex trafficking by force, fraud or coercion; trafficking into servitude; two counts of transportation into prostitution; importation of an alien for immoral purposes; and bringing an illegal alien into the United States. The trafficking charges carry a potential sentence of life in prison.

According to investigators, Okhotina paid \$6,000 dollars to obtain a fraudulent visitor's visa for her then 18-year-old niece to travel from a small town near St. Petersburg to Los Angeles. When the teen arrived in the United States, Okhotina allegedly forced the girl into prostitution to work off her smuggling fees. The young woman told agents that Okhotina hid her passport, destroyed her return ticket to Russia, and verbally and physically abused her during her month-long stay in February 2003.

As part of the investigation, representatives from ICE and the United States Justice Department traveled to Russia, where the victim now lives. In interviews, the woman described to investigators how she was subjected to regular beatings, threats, and forced rape by strangers in apartments, hotels, and limousines in Los Angeles and Las Vegas.

“The trafficking and enslavement of people is one of the vilest forms of exploitation playing out in our community and throughout the world,” said Los Angeles ICE special agent-in-charge Loraine Brown. “The greed and depravity of the perpetrators allows them to inflict devastating physical and emotional pain, even, as this case shows, on their own flesh and blood. Together with our law enforcement partners, ICE is working to ensure that those who engage in this reprehensible practice pay the price.”

A criminal complaint contains allegations that a defendant has committed a crime. Every defendant is presumed to be innocent until and unless proven guilty.

Okhotina is scheduled to make her first appearance in United States District Court in Los Angeles Monday afternoon.

This case was investigated by U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, the Federal Bureau of Investigation, the Office of the Inspector General for the United States Department of Labor, and the Los Angeles Police Department. The case is being prosecuted by the Civil Rights Section of the United States Attorney's Office and the Civil Rights Division of the United States Department of Justice.

ICE

U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement was established in March 2003 as the largest investigative arm of the Department of Homeland Security. ICE is comprised of five integrated divisions that form a 21st century law enforcement agency with broad responsibilities for a number of key homeland security priorities.